

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**SENT TO D.C.**

1-5-07

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Continental and Commercial National Bank

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number 208 South LaSalle  not for publication

city or town Chicago  vicinity

state Illinois code IL county Cook code 031 zip code 60604

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

California Office of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the  
National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the  
National Register

removed from the National  
Register

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if resource is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

\_\_\_\_\_ COMMERCE/TRADE: Financial Institution

\_\_\_\_\_ COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

\_\_\_\_\_ DOMESTIC: Hotel

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

\_\_\_\_\_ Classical Revival

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_ concrete

roof \_\_\_\_\_ asphalt

walls \_\_\_\_\_ stone, terra cotta

\_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheets.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1914

**Significant Dates**

1914

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Graham, Burnham and Co., Architects

Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, Architects

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property**      less than 1 acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	447529	4636352	3	___	_____	_____
2	___	_____	_____	4	___	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title      John M. Tess, President

organization      Heritage Consulting Group      date      July 6, 2006

street & number      1120 NW Northrup Street      telephone      (503) 228-0272

city or town      Portland      state      OR      zip code      97209

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name      Michael W. Reschke, The Prime Group, Inc

street & number      321 N. Clark St. Suite 250      telephone      (312) 917-4201

city or town      Chicago      state      IL      zip code      60610

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).  
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Continental and Commercial Bank  
Chicago, IL

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The Continental and Commerce National Bank is located on Block 97 of the School Section Addition in the financial district of Chicago, Cook County, Illinois. The parcel is a full block bounded by Quincy Street on the south, Adams Street on the north, Wells Street (Fifth Avenue) on the west and LaSalle Street on the east. The 21-story steel frame Classical Revival style building was designed by Burnham and Company in 1911 and completed by his successor firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White in 1914 as the new consolidated home of the Continental and Commercial Bank.

Setting: The building is located in the intensely urban high-rise Financial District of the Chicago Loop. The Financial District could be roughly described as running along North and South LaSalle Street from Washington to Congress Street. Buildings in the immediate vicinity are high-rise commercial, mostly financial, built to the lot line. Across the street to the east is the Burnham and Root designed Rookery building (1885-88). The block to the north contains 190 S. LaSalle, a 1987 John Burgee/Philip Johnson building. The block to the south is the Federal Reserve Bank by Graham, Anderson, Probst and White (1922). Across the street from this building is another Graham, Anderson, Probst and White building, the Illinois Merchants Bank (1924). At the end of South LaSalle, one block away is the Chicago Board of Trade Building designed by Holabird and Roche in 1930.

Site: The Continental and Commercial National Bank is located on a flat rectangular lot measuring 325 feet by 166 feet. The building is constructed to the lot line with a perimeter sidewalk. There are no character-defining landscape features.

Structure: The building is a 21-story, 287-foot high, freestanding commercial office skyscraper, including attic, plus a basement and two sub-basements. It is a steel frame structure faced in white terra cotta and granite with a rectilinear column grid typically 17 feet east-west and 13 feet north and south.

Exterior: The four facades of the Continental and Commerce National Bank are similar in materials and form, with the LaSalle Street façade (east) being the primary elevation. The Wells Street (Fifth Avenue) elevation faces a section of Chicago's elevated transit line and is a simpler version of LaSalle Street. The elevations along Quincy and Adams streets are identical and are composed in the same overall form as the LaSalle Street façade. All four elevations consist of a tripartite composition; a 3-story granite base, a twelve-story white terra cotta shaft; and a three story terra cotta capital that mimics the ground level colonnade. The fourth and seventeenth floors, with frieze and beltcourse above and below, serve as horizontal banding on an otherwise

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vertical building. The roof is flat and has unadorned utility rooms that are set back and are not visible from the street.

**East (LaSalle Street) Elevation:** Although all four facades are prominent and visible, the east elevation of LaSalle Street is clearly the primary.

Base (first - third floors): The main entrance is distinguished by its loggia made of eight polished granite fluted Doric columns. These columns are flanked with paired pilasters at the north and south corners. There are eleven bays in a symmetrical pattern on the ground level (A:BBB:CCC:BBB:A). The two A bays originally contained large double doors with a three light transom and granite door surround. The B bays contain a large store front window framed in granite. The C bays contain the main entrances to the lobby. Each of the three entrances are decorated with granite surrounds and flat projecting pediments adorned with carved acanthus leaves and scrolls. Above the pediments, a band with carved Greek fretwork serves as base for the two-story windows. The doors themselves are brass framed topped with a brass spandrel section with the street number "208" in a black clean lined script.

At the second and third floor level, in all eleven bays, are metal framed twelve light (non-historic) over sized windows. A wide frieze above the third floor contains carved lion heads, a band of egg and dart trim, and in the center of the frieze are the incised letters spelling *National Bank and Trust Company*. The original carving *Continental and Commercial National Bank* for the initial banking tenant was removed in the 1930s when the National Bank and Trust Company took over occupancy.

Shaft (fifth – seventeenth floor): The middle section of the LaSalle street façade is divided into eleven bays. Above the fifth floor is a wide cornice with continuous fret ornamentation. The two end bays have a single window flanked by broad areas of terra cotta anchoring the building corners. The nine inner bays have paired windows separated by a continuous mullion which begins at the fifth floor and terminates in lion heads at the sixteenth floor. Windows are double hung wood sash. Under each window is a spandrel containing a rosette. Pilasters begin at the fifth floor and extend through the seventeenth floor ending with capitals decorated with a band of egg and dart. The cornice atop the seventeenth floor has been removed and is covered with a metal sheathing.

Capital (eighteenth – twentieth floor): A terra cotta colonnade of fluted Doric columns tops the building and is similarly styled to the base colonnade at a smaller scale. In order to visually stand

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out the spandrels and piers on these upper floors are done in green terra cotta. The column capitals are decorated with a band of egg and dart ornament. The two end bays each have a single double hung wood sash window. The inner bays have paired double hung sash windows, beginning at the eighteenth floor and terminating at the twentieth. The spandrels in the capital section on the nineteenth and twentieth floors have a rosette atop a panel of fretwork.

Banding Sections (fourth and seventeenth): The fourth floor has a deep cornice with modillions and a frieze containing fretwork. The mullions between each of the paired windows are dark green terra cotta scrolled piers topped with a carved lions head. The spandrel section has a dark green terra cotta X pattern with a circle in the intersection of the X.

The seventeenth floor has a cornice adorned with a frieze of arcade and circles. The eleven bays are delineated the same as the shaft, base, and capital sections. The two end bays have a single double hung sash window and the nine inner bays have two double hung sash windows.

The twenty-first floor, also known as the attic, had all of its ornament removed in the 1940s. The penthouse is clad in granite slab and the structure spans the section of the inner nine bays.

### **West (Wells Street) Elevation**

The Wells Street elevation faces Chicago's elevated transit line. A simpler version of the LaSalle Street elevation, it is clear this elevation was secondary in importance. The façade is nine bays instead of eleven.

Base (first - third floors): Two granite Doric columns mark the central entrance. Granite pilasters flank the columns. The first floor is arranged in a symmetrical pattern of A: B:B: C: C: C: B: B: A. The two A bays originally contained large double doors with a three light transom and granite door surround. The doors have been replaced with glass storefronts. The B bays contain a large store front windows framed in granite. The C bays contain three main entrances to the lobby.

Shaft (fifth - seventeenth floor): The middle section is similar to all other elevations except the bays are slightly wider as the number of bays was reduced to nine.

Capital (eighteenth - twentieth floor): Six terra cotta fluted columns line the upper three floors. Ornamentation on the spandrels is identical to the other elevations.

Banding Sections (fourth and seventeenth): These sections are identical to the other bays.

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### North and South Elevations

The side elevations along Quincy and Adams streets are identical and are composed in the same overall form as the LaSalle Street façade. There are nineteen bays. The end bays have single double hung sash windows and the inner bays have two double hung sash windows. At the center bay on each elevation are iron fire escapes. Simple granite and terra cotta pilasters line the lower and upper three stories, in place of the colonnades on the front façade. Two granite Doric columns mark the central entrance. Six terra cotta columns line the upper three stories.

### Light Court

The building has a central open light court, 155 feet by 54 feet, faced in glazed white brick. The light court commences on the sixth floor. It is comprised of nine inner bays on the north and south walls and three bays on the east and west walls. These bays have three windows, each separated by a continuous mullion frame. Windows are double hung wood sash. Below the windows are unadorned spandrels.

### Interior

Sub-Sub Basement – Basement: The building has a pier and vault foundation; the piers are continuous throughout the basement. The sub-sub basement is an L-shape and holds the boiler, engine, and pump rooms, along with a row of miscellaneous utilitarian rooms on the south wall. The sub-basement has a square foot print that does not extend out to the lot line. This level contains the upper section of the engine and boiler rooms, and the fan and store rooms. The basement has ten various bank vaults with a central lobby corridor accessible by two circular iron staircases flanking the north and south of the middle tier vault section, and miscellaneous meeting rooms on the outer tier of the floor. The basic floor plan has a double loaded corridor circulation plan with two tiers of rooms on either side. There is a bank of six elevators in the southeastern corner.

First – Fourth Floors: The first floor lobbies on the east and west elevations are large open spaces containing entrances to the shops immediately north and south of the lobbies. Two banks of six elevators flank the lobbies. The first floor finishes in the public spaces are a combination of green and beige marble and brass accents typical of the late 1950s. Shop spaces line the east and west elevations as well as filling the central core. An escalator leads to the second floor on



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the east elevation. This escalator sits in approximately the same location as the original staircase to the second floor. The second floor originally containing the banking hall was remodeled into office space. The second floor holds the original board room and executive offices. Located in the northeast corner, the board room has a gray and black marble fireplace, dark wood paneled walls, and varnished boxed beam ceiling.

The third and fourth floors were inserted into the original banking hall space for additional offices.

The barrel vaulted ceiling and upper portions of the banking room are still intact; however, they are obscured by the insertion of the additional floors. Original remaining fabric includes: the glass and stone barrel vaulted ceiling, the clerestory level, and the beltcourse below the clerestory. Also concealed are the massive urns at the west end of the building. These urns rest upon the large beam that spans the width of the banking hall. All of these features retain their original embellishment such as Greek fretwork, egg and dart molding, rosettes, etc.

Fifth – Twenty-first Floors: The office floors of the Continental and Commercial National Bank are planned around the building's central light court. The basic office floor plan has an eight foot wide double loaded corridor circulation plan with two tiers of offices one facing outward to the adjacent streets, the other facing into the light court. The general layout has been maintained although from the beginning certain sections, for larger tenants, were free of partitions and corridors. The wall and floors of the corridors and the toilet rooms were lined in white Alabama marble. Approximately 75% of this marble is intact in the upper corridors. The office space themselves have been altered many times to suit various tenant needs.

### Alterations:

#### *Exterior:*

The exterior of the building remains in good condition. In, 1916, two years after the building opened, the shop windows and doorways located behind the colonnade were redesigned and moved flush with the columns. The original wall material and ornament was retained and the integrity of this monumental front was maintained. During the 1940s, structural problems led to the removal of the terra cotta frieze at the seventeenth floor and the ornamental balustrade, decorative urns and the cornice. Despite their removal the building's basic composition, with its three clearly delineated divisions, and its original design aesthetic are clearly evident and still convey the original building's overall architectural form.

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### *Interior; first and second floors*

Interior remodeling carried out in 1959-1960 altered the original design of the first floor lobby and second floor banking room and obscured the central dome. The central stair from the first floor to the second floor was replaced with an escalator. The large columns were replaced with square marble posts. The original second floor banking hall was replaced with a double loaded corridor with offices similar to other floors. In addition, two floors (now the 3rd and 4th floors) were inserted into the central dome space where additional office space was added. The dome was then concealed. Currently the dome space contains ductwork, electrical conduit, etc.

It is the present owner's intent to rehabilitate the building using the historic preservation investment tax credits. Work includes the partial restoration of the historic banking room including the removal of part of the third and fourth floors to create an atrium exposing the original barrel vaulted space from the second floor to the sixth floor.

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## Summary

Designed by D.H. Burnham and Company in 1911, and constructed and completed in 1914 by the successor firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, the Continental and Commercial National Bank was a product of the increasing popularity of the Classical Revival style and its adoption by the private corporate world as the penultimate style in private office buildings. Contextually it relates to the influence of late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Classic Revival style in Chicago.

The building is eligible under criterion C as an excellent local example of the Classical Revival style in downtown Chicago and of the application of the style, along with its mass and scale, in creating a prototypical monument to commerce that came to fruition in Chicago over the next two decades.

"Of all the later works, most important to Burnham was the Continental and Commercial National Bank and Trust, now 208 South LaSalle Building."<sup>1</sup>

## History of the Building

The Continental and Commercial National Bank Building, located at 208 S. LaSalle Street (1911-1914), was one of Daniel H. Burnham's last two designs prior to his death on June 1, 1912. Burnham was 64 years old when he designed the building. It was an important commission for him as it was the first privately owned building in downtown Chicago to occupy an entire block. Bank president George Reynolds had spent years acquiring all of the property on the block for this purpose. It was the largest site ever selected for an office building in the city and the combination of the twenty-one stories in height with the entire block made the building one of the largest office buildings in the United States. Up to that point, generally the only freestanding buildings were civic structures or department stores. In this manner, the Continental and Commercial National Bank would become the precursor to the other monumental block sized buildings constructed in the 1920s in the immediate vicinity by Burnham's successor firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White. Early local press coverage was considerable as it was going to be "an important landmark in the city." The height combined with the bulk and scale

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1. Kristen Schaffer, *Daniel H. Burnham: Visionary Architect and Planner*. (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2003) p. 195.

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was to be impressive and challenging for the designer. "It was a gigantic enterprise whose conception, planning, and execution called less for courage than for architectural, engineering and artistic skill".<sup>2</sup>

The client for the Continental and Commercial National Bank Building was bank president George McClelland Reynolds. Reynolds was Chicago's leading banker for over 25 years. During his tenure, the bank grew to be one of the country's largest banks and was in the forefront of modern banking practices. The bank had been founded in 1865 as the Commercial National Bank of Chicago. By the late 1890s it was developing a solid organization and generated business by aiding small struggling country banks in the Midwest. Beginning in 1909, Reynolds envisioned a large central bank that could provide varied services to an array of patrons, from individuals to businesses to associated banks. In September of 1909, Commercial merged with Bankers National Bank. Soon followed a merger with the American Trust and Savings Bank and then Hibernian Bank, which held an excellent reputation among Chicago's citizens. The bank was credited by its contemporaries as being a major factor in ending Chicago's dependence upon "Eastern capital."

Physically and symbolically, this new bank would be headquartered at 208 S. LaSalle Street. "The many combinations, buildings, movings, and changes came to rest in this great building where the product of the bank melting pot was completely housed under one roof. The Continental and Commercial group of banks, the product of forty years of growth and development...to give Chicago and the West the banking services they required."<sup>3</sup> At the time, this concept of multiple banks under one roof was not a common practice. The Continental and Commercial National Bank was the first, a decade ahead of its competitors.<sup>4</sup>

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2. "Continental and Commercial National Bank". National Register Nomination, 1988.

3. Arthur D. Welton, "The Making of A Modern Bank; An Historical Sketch of the Origin of the Continental and Commercial Banks of Chicago and the Causes Which Contributed to and Influenced Their Upbuilding", (Chicago, 1923).

4. *Ibid.*; in subsequent years, the bank continued to grow and continued to merge. In 1922 it acquired the Fort Dearborn National Bank, and in 1929, Illinois Merchants Trust Company. In 1933, it was renamed the Continental Illinois National Bank & Trust Co. The bank did falter during the Great Depression and required a loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, however the bank regained its footing and continued to flourish in the Chicago banking scene for decades. In 1994, Continental Bank was acquired by Bank of America.

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For these varied reasons, Burnham considered the bank as one of his last significant projects. "Now at my age I cannot expect to take another go at a monumental job and I am going to put into this one all I know. I hope to make it the final word in business buildings in every particular."<sup>5</sup> Although Burnham was on the Board of Directors of the Bank, the Board decided to hold a competition for the building design. At first, Burnham preferred not to enter. He eventually changed his mind and worked closely with his partner Ernest Graham on the design. The preparation of plans and presentation drawings took one month. Work was done at Graham's home and Burnham made daily visits. Burnham's diary entries describe the process, "Here all day until 12 (midnight)...worked hard...over the presentation for the Continental Commercial National Bank competition."<sup>6</sup>

Because of its substantial size and visibility, there was significant competition for the job. Competitors included most of the larger architectural firms: Holabird and Roche; Jarvis Hunt; Jenney, Mundie, and Jensen; Schmidt, Garden and Martin; Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge; and Marshall and Fox. On June 5, 1911, the bank board selected Burnham and Company.

Work proceeded rapidly. Burnham was facing a deadline. As of September 1<sup>st</sup>, the City of Chicago would impose a height restriction of two hundred feet. Burnham's plan for the Continental and Commercial National Bank building was two hundred sixty feet.

"The Continental and Commercial National Bank is about to build; the permit must be taken out on or before September 1<sup>st</sup>, because at that date the ordinance confining buildings in this city to two hundred feet in height instead of two hundred and sixty feet comes into force. No one else can work out and determine the final plan and elevation and I must stick to it day and night until this is accomplished."<sup>7</sup>

Reynolds and Burnham filed for permit just two weeks before the height limit was implemented.

The building would set a standard for future office buildings. The large free-standing design with double-loaded corridors would provide better lighting for all workers as there were no party walls to contend with. A rental brochure for the building stated "Light—the location of the building on four streets assures the maximum amount of natural light to all street offices. The

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<sup>5</sup> "Continental and Commercial National Bank", National Register Nomination, 1988. Taken from Burnham letters. Daniel Burnham Papers. Art Institute of Chicago.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

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walls of the central court are of white enamel brick, thus giving splendid light to all court offices."<sup>8</sup> The upper floors would house offices for a variety of business enterprises. The first floor would hold retail shops on all four elevations. The second floor would be the banking hall.

On the exterior, a tall three story columned base created a monumental colonnade which would establish a scale for the entire financial district. The tripartite composition provided solidity to the design and the terra cotta ornament provided visual interest at the smaller scale. It was Burnham's desire that the office building, as a building type, be a monument to commerce and that it would rise to the stature equal of public institutions such as government offices and libraries. Burnham characterized commercial buildings as definers rather than occupiers of the public space of the city. Through the use of the classical architectural language, Burnham would accomplish this goal; it was particularly the use of classicism that lent to the importance of the occupants and structure.<sup>9</sup>

The building was completed in 1914 by Burnham's successor company Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White. The completed building was faithful to Burnham's original design. Construction drawings dated April 12, 1913, bear the stamp "Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White, Architects, Successors to Graham, Burnham and Company.

In July 1915, The Architectural Record carried a lengthy article on Burnham, providing a comprehensive view of the firm's work. It ended with a discussion of the Continental and Commercial National Bank:

The Continental and Commercial National Bank and office building at Chicago may be regarded as the culmination of the important work done in the last fifteen years of the firm as D. H. Burnham and Company. It was designed in its essential features during the lifetime of Mr. Burnham and marks the last great works with which his fame is intimately connected. Since his decease in June 1, 1912, the building was carried to its completion by his former associates, now known as Graham, Burnham and Co.<sup>10</sup>

Located directly opposite the Rookery, the Continental and Commercial National Bank displays the distance Burnham traveled since Root's death and the use he made of his late-life education, now fully integrated in the design of the tall office building. The Bank's

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8. "Continental and Commercial National Bank", National Register Nomination, 1988.

9. Schaffer.

10. Peter S. Wight. "Daniel Hudson Burnham and His Associates", (The Architectural Record, July, 1915).

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classical language and light granite and terra cotta façade contrast with the dark medieval tone of the Rookery.<sup>11</sup>

### The Rise of the Classical Revival style

The renewed interest in classicism was partially due to the influence of the French l'Ecole Beaux Arts architectural philosophy. Many young American architects studied at l' Ecole des Beaux Arts and brought back with them ideas about classicism and the sense of order it brought to architecture. Chief developers of the style were the New York firm of McKim, Mead and White.

The firm name became synonymous with the Classical Revival style. Charles McKim's design for the Boston Public Library in 1887 was particularly influential the future design of public buildings. When the east coast architectural firms of McKim, Mead, and White and Richard Morris Hunt were invited by Burnham to participate in the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893, they introduced Chicago to the white and pink granites, marble and glazed terra cotta buildings of the Beaux Arts tradition. This resulted in a shift away from the red brick construction of buildings such as the Rookery.

The Columbian Exposition provided people with a view of a perfectly planned city with ideal buildings. What they took away was a desire to create their own perfect cities. Often, the planning concepts of the Columbian Exposition were lost and only the architectural style was carried out. Future clients began asking for these types of buildings, regardless of their function.

What at first had been reserved for public structures soon became the most popular style for private industry. While public agencies incorporated it into many public amenities such as fountains, monuments, lamp posts, bridges etc., corporate America embraced the style and demanded it in their new buildings as well.<sup>12</sup>

It was such fairs that brought the City Beautiful movement to thousands of people who delighted in their bright order and the conveyed associations. As a result in scores of cities planning commissions were appointed and hundreds of new classical buildings were begun to house museums, libraries, art galleries, courthouses, and other public institutions.<sup>13</sup>

Classicism moved into the private realm of architecture as the business world embraced the style,

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11. Schaffer, p. 195.

12. Leland M. Roth, A Concise History of American Architecture, (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).

13. Roth, p. 216.

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Continental and Commercial National Bank  
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as demonstrated in Burnham's design of the Continental and Commercial National Bank. Characteristic of the style are the three building sections comprised of base, shaft, and capital, with the base being comprised of monumental columns and pilasters. Columns, pediments, surrounds, and cornices are decorated with classical motifs such as fretwork, scrolls, rosettes, and egg and dart coursing. The advent of glazed terra cotta blended particularly well with granite and marble. Used on the upper floors, it reduced weight and expense, but maintained the appearance and detailing of the classical style. Although there can be extensive embellishment, the overall effect is one of restrained elegance.

### Daniel Burnham and the Classical Revival Style

Since the death of Burnham's partner, John Root, coincided with the beginnings of the work on the Columbian Exposition, Charles McKim became Burnham's closest associate on the project. Their friendship continued long after the Exposition. Burnham had the opportunity to travel abroad for the first time in 1896 where he viewed the classical architecture of Greece and Rome firsthand. The combination of the Exposition, his friendship with McKim, and his trip to Europe significantly influenced Burnham's later works. He wholeheartedly embraced the classic Beaux Arts tradition, to the point that when future employee Peirce Anderson asked for advice regarding his future, Burnham encouraged him to pursue studies at l'Ecole. Anderson took Burnham's advice and attended l'Ecole in 1895-99, prior to joining the firm.<sup>14</sup>

As part of Burnham's vision for a planned orderly city, he adopted the Classical Revival style to all types of buildings. His aim was to develop a standard that could be modeled after the ideas presented at the Columbian Exposition. The regularity of classicism could be easily adapted to modern repetition. "Burnham developed a series of flexible and adaptable façade strategies that could be reused and developed as the project warranted."<sup>15</sup> Burnham and Company eventually developed a model office building in the Classical Revival style and were responsible for office buildings in this style for cities, such as New York, San Francisco, Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Boston, Washington D. C. and even London. By 1910, Burnham's firm had become the largest in the world, surpassing even the large New York firm of McKim, Mead, and White.

From this time on, Burnham worked in the classical mode. The strength and solidity of his office

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14. Sally A. Kitt Chappell, Architecture and Planning of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, 1912-1936: Transforming Tradition. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

15. Schaffer, p. 203.



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buildings was expressed in the use of granite exterior and marble. A clear sense of order and unity was the goal with the emphasis on balance, symmetry, and restraint. All of the later designs are tripartite in horizontal divisions. Each building has a beginning, middle and end or base, shaft, and capital. Classical ornament articulates every structure. Giant orders at the lower two or three stories and giant pilasters on top provide a sense of completion. The repetitive detail and vertical rhythm of the shaft are tied together by end bays. The internal plan is consistent with lower stories being public with a central light court; upper stories are private and corridors are double-loaded.

Burnham's last buildings in Chicago display a continuation of themes he had begun with Root in the 1870s, but they reveal rich variety in the hollow square plan type, as well as scale and use. Exteriors show the late phase of Burnham's classical inspiration for the tall building, and represent his thinking, as depicted in the Plan of Chicago, that the entire downtown area would be filled with approximately twenty-story buildings. These late works exemplify the size and appearance of the buildings that Burnham thought should eventually occupy every block.<sup>16</sup>

When Burnham died, he left his successors an active and successful architectural practice, a trained, well-organized staff capable of designing any contemporary building type, hundreds of satisfied clients, a well-accepted style, an international reputation, and a broadly shared vision of architecture and the city. There was enough work already in the office to keep more than two hundred men busy for months, and a promise of over a million dollars more in commissions to come, an enviable legacy for six younger men. . . . Like Burnham Graham was a conservative, careful architect with a deeply ingrained respect for tradition, craftsmanship, and sound business practice.<sup>17</sup>

As successors to Burnham and Company, the firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White was at the center of the movement that produced big offices through the building boom decades of the 1920s. After Burnham's death through the death of Probst in 1942, the firm built over forty large office buildings and eleven major department stores. During this time, their firm continued the work the Classic Revival style. During the years before and just after the First World War, Burnham's influence on the firm is clearly evident. It was only beginning in the 1930s that the firm even began experimenting with other styles such as the Art Deco and Art Moderne style.<sup>18</sup>

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16. Schaffer, page 186.

17. Schaffer, pages 260-61.

18. Chappell.

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Continental and Commercial National Bank  
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### The Classical Revival style in Chicago: A Comparative Discussion

The years 1911 to 1914 were strong financial years for Chicago business and thus for the construction industry. This strength in the Chicago economy coincided with the renewed popularity of the Classic Revival style. Private industry was highly regarded. Gone were the days of respect for the gentleman of leisure. The hard working capitalist was the role model and capitalism itself was considered a highly patriotic endeavor. The men who were Burnham's clients were all successful private capitalists. As they and their companies succeeded, so they built buildings to reflect their success. The rationalism of ancient Greece and Rome was the fitting design for the large corporations. Combined with the new steel frame construction that allowed for much taller buildings, application of the Classic architectural language further enhanced this sense of monumentality and permanence.<sup>19</sup>

The Historic Landmarks Survey for the City of Chicago has identified numerous buildings designed in the Classic Revival style. These buildings range in type from residences, to theatres, to office buildings. However, there are relatively few of the monumental type office buildings comparable to the Continental and Commercial National Bank and these are located in the "Loop". According to the survey, there are 18 extant buildings in the Classic Revival style located in the Loop:

*Allerton Building, Art Institute of Chicago (101 S. Michigan Avenue, 1892, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge)*

*New York Life Building (37-41 S. LaSalle Street, 1893, Jenney and Mundie)*

*Central YMCA Headquarters (19-21 S. LaSalle Street, 1893, Jenney and Mundie)*

*Commercial National Bank (125 S. Clark Street, 1905, D. H. Burnham and Co.)*

*The Northern Trust Company (50 S. LaSalle Street, 1905, Frost and Granger)*

*City Hall-County Building (100-140 N. Clark Street, 1906, Holabird and Roche)*

*Illinois Athletic Club (112 S. Michigan Avenue, 1908, Barnett, Haynes, and Barnett)*

*Insurance Exchange Building (157-185 W. Jackson Boulevard, 1912, D. H. Burnham and Co.)*

*Conway Building (26-40 N. Clark Street, 1913, D. H. Burnham and Co.)*

*Utilities Building (319 S. LaSalle Street, 1913, Alfred Alschuler)*

**Continental and Commercial National Bank (208 S. LaSalle Street, 1914, D. H.**

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19. Roth.

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### **Burnham and Co.)**

*State and Lake Building (174-196 N. State Street., 1917, C. W. and George Rapp)*

*Chicago Theatre (175 N. State Street, 1920, C. W. and George Rapp)*

*State Bank Building (120 S. LaSalle Street, 1921, Graham, Anderson, Probst, and White)*

*Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago (230 S LaSalle Street, 1921, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White)*

*The Covenant Club (10 N. Dearborn Avenue, 1923, Walter Aschlager)*

*Goodman Theatre (120 S. Columbia Drive., 1925, Shaw, Howard Van Doren)*

*Jeweler's Building. (35 E. Wacker Drive, 1925, Giaver and Dinkleberg)*

Only eleven are office buildings, the remainder being either public or private institutions. The Continental and Commercial National Bank stands apart due to the sheer mass and scale. Being the largest site and largest building to that point in Chicago, the Continental and Commercial National Bank asserted business as monument.

A particularly useful comparison is the Conway Building, also designed by Burnham.

Constructed at almost the same time and completed the year after, the Conway is twenty-one stories in height with shops on the first floor and offices above. With its tripartite divisions and monumental three story loggia, it is similar to the Continental and Commercial National Bank, but not as exuberant in asserting the classic revival style. It differs in that it has rounded corners similar to Burnham's Flatiron building in New York (1901-03). In addition, the shaft of the building is divided twice by horizontal bands that create an emphasis on the horizontal rather than the vertical. In the Continental and Commercial National Bank building, the emphasis is on verticality. This is achieved through the use of continuous vertical pilasters in the 12 story shaft. These pilasters, placed between every pair of windows, give the building a feeling of height beyond its twenty-one stories. The capital section continues this vertical emphasis with uninterrupted fluted columns and pilasters. Add to this the three story monumental loggia at the base and the overall feeling is one of height rather than girth. This clever use of spatial division is what allows the building to appear proportional in height to its bulk. In fact, the Continental and Commercial National Bank has few antecedents of comparable stature and only can be compared accurately to those buildings that followed.

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The Continental and Commercial National Bank is largely intact on the exterior. The cornice was removed at some point, a fate that befell many of Chicago's early 20th Century office buildings. The Conway Building and the Illinois Merchant's Bank have both lost their cornices. In spite of this, the Conway Building was listed on the National Register in 1984. The sheer size of the buildings allows the Classic Revival style to remain evident in spite of this loss. The capital, or topmost level, of the tripartite composition is three full stories in height thus the loss of the decorative cornice is unfortunate, but does not make the building unrecognizable as a Classic Revival building.

The interior also has a strong degree of integrity though unfortunately the great central domed banking space has been covered. Three floors were inserted into this space in the late 1950s. The dome still exists and it is the owner's intent to reopen a portion of this space. The elimination of the great public banking space was another common practice in Chicago. The Conway building lost its two-story rotunda in the 1930s.

In spite of the loss of the cornice and the public banking space, the building exterior retains significant character defining features of the style and Burnham's original design. On the exterior, the tripartite divisions are clearly evident. The monumental loggia with its freestanding fluted columns on LaSalle Street is intact as are the three story pilasters on the Quincy and Adams Street elevations and the two granite Doric columns on the Wells Street elevation. The intermediary floor is intact and the shaft, comprised of 12 floors is intact. Though the upper floors from 17 through 21 have suffered the loss of ornamentation, the primary architectural elements defining the Classic Revival style remain. The three-story freestanding columns on the LaSalle Street elevation are intact as are the three-story pilaster along Quincy and Adams Streets, and the three-story columns along Wells Street are also intact. In addition to these large architectural elements, an abundance of ornamentation is still intact. Some of this detailing includes Greek fretwork above the third floor in each bay on all four elevations, heavily adorned lintels above door openings on all street corners, Doric capitals on the three-story columns, lions heads in all bays at the 3rd and 17th floors, an X pattern and large scrolled brackets in the spandrels at the 4th floor, multi-layered heavily adorned cornice at the 4th floor topping off the building base, Doric capitals on the pilasters at the top of the shaft section, blind arcade pattern in the horizontal band just below the capital section, rosettes in window spandrels of all floors.

### Conclusion:

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

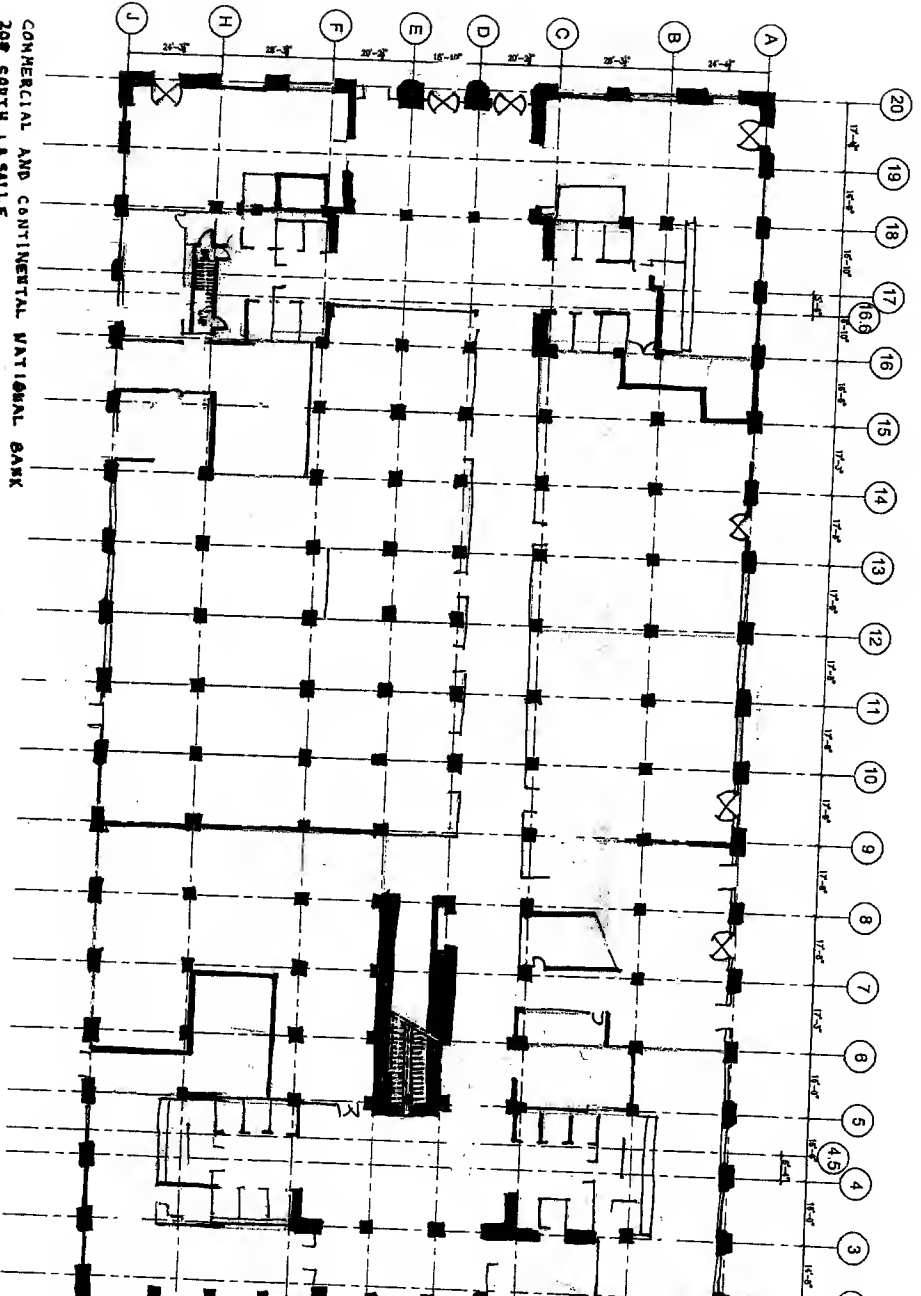
Continental and Commercial National Bank  
Chicago, IL

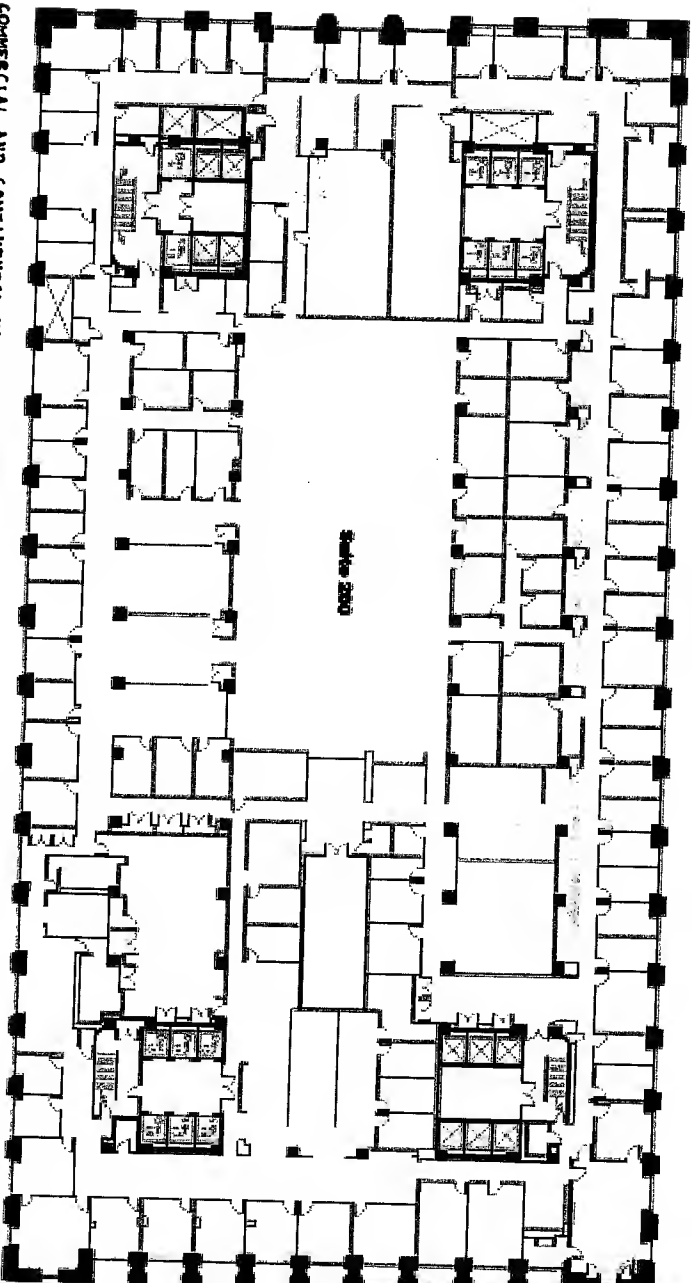
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The Burnham designed 1914 Continental and Commercial National Bank is a locally outstanding and largely intact example of the Classic Revival style and a defining application of the style in establishing the office building as a monument to commercialism, one that would grow in prominence as commercial development Chicago moved forward.

COMMERCIAL AND CONTINENTAL NATIONAL BANK  
 208 SOUTH LA SALLE  
 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
 1st FLOOR





Sales Room

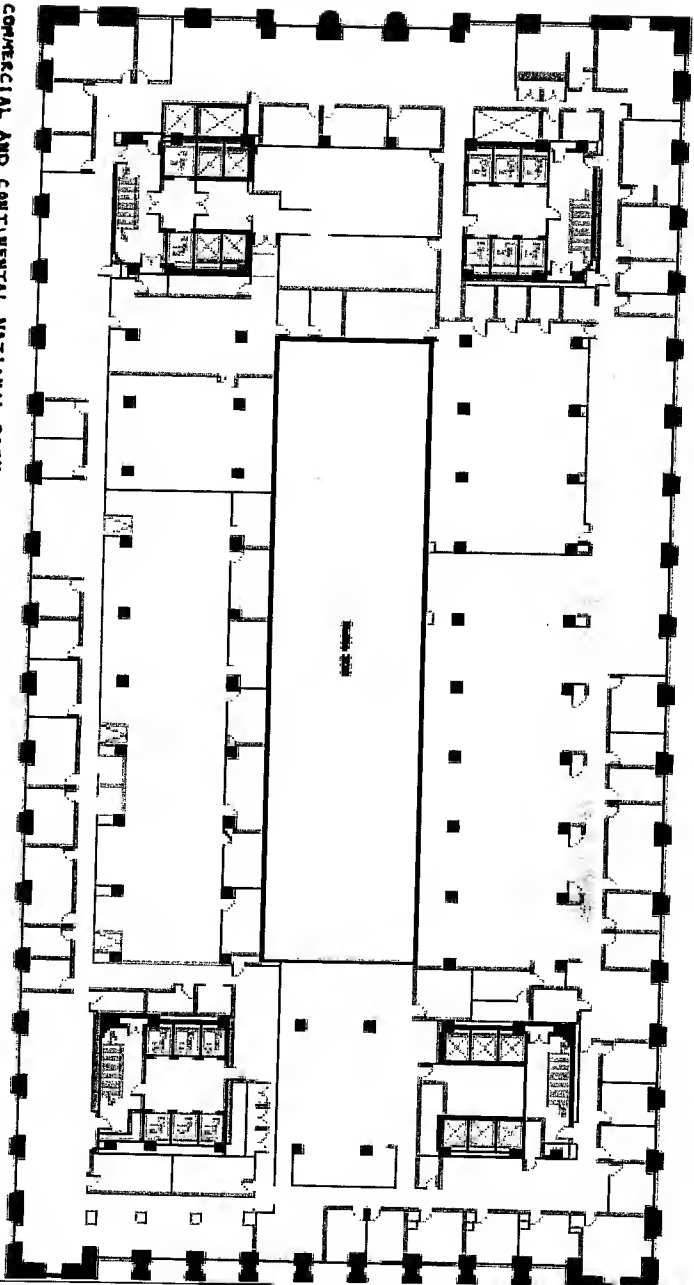
COMMERCIAL AND CONTINENTAL NATIONAL BANK

205 SOUTH LA SALLE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

2nd FLOOR

EXISTING 1906



COMMERCIAL AND CONTINENTAL NATIONAL BANK  
208 SOUTH LASALLE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR

EXISTING 2006

Survey Date



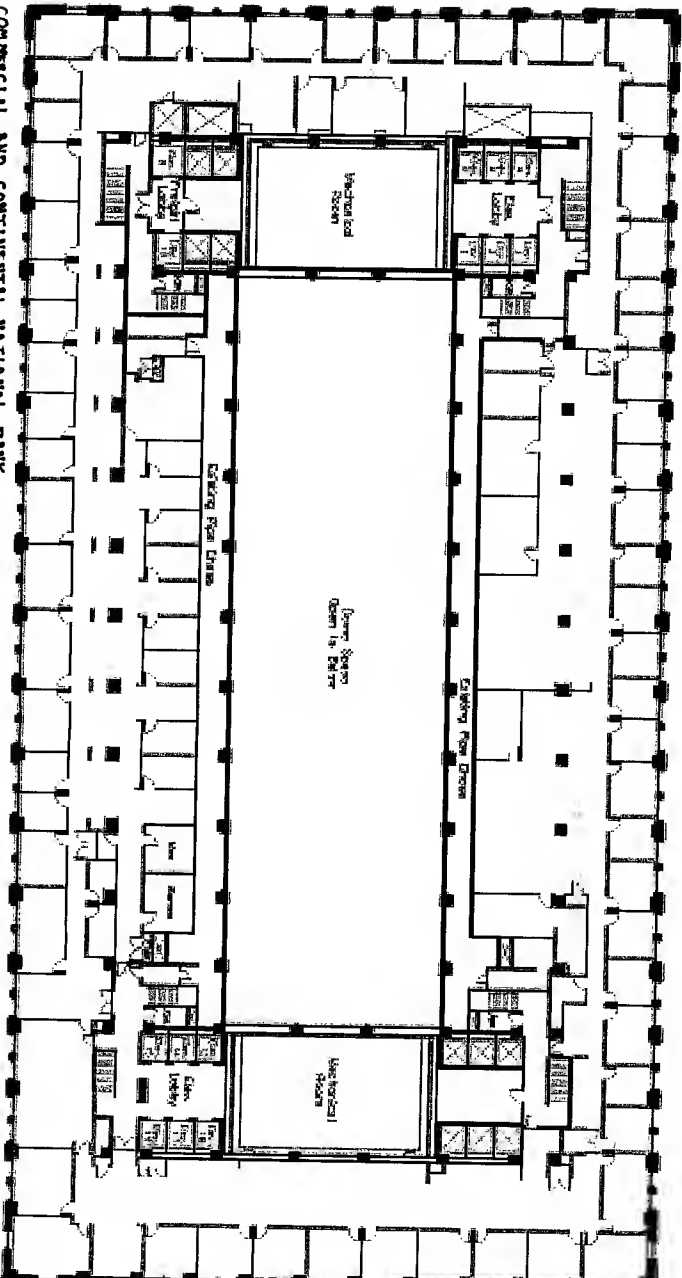


COMMERCIAL AND CONTINENTAL NATIONAL BANK

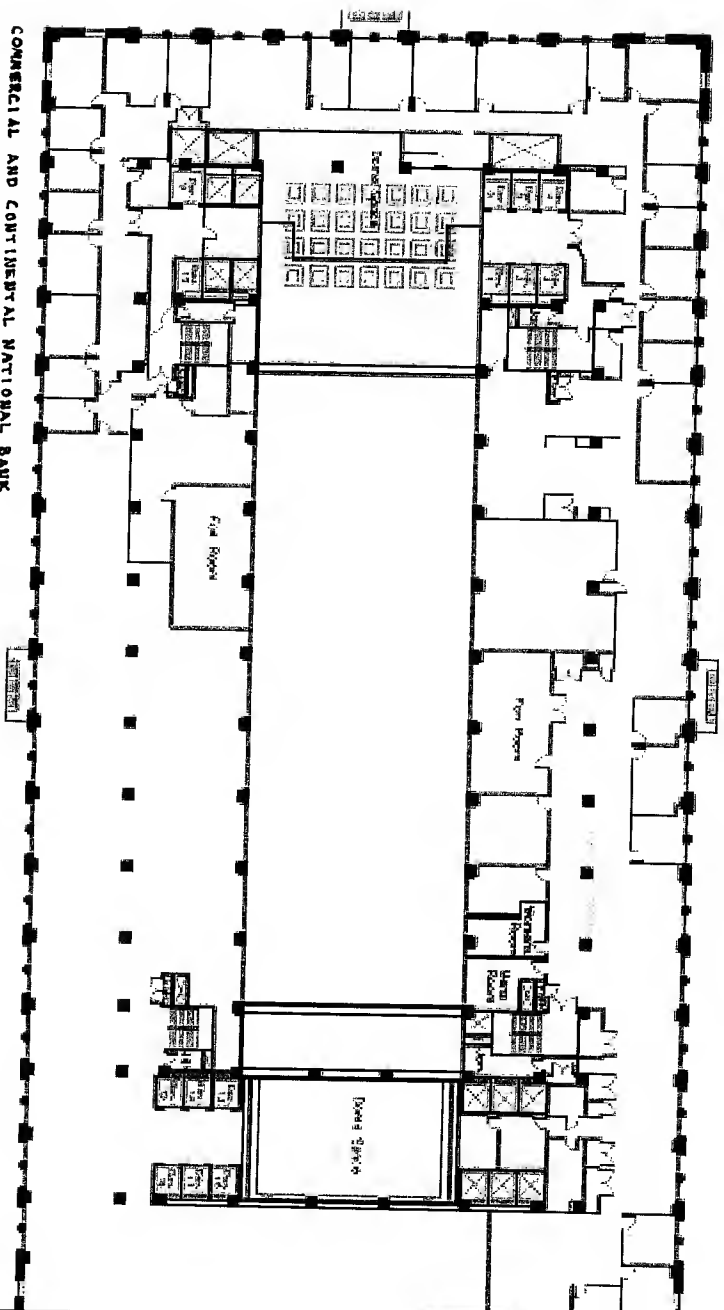
208 SOUTH LA Salle  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

4th FLOOR

MECHANICAL: 200 6



Down Stair

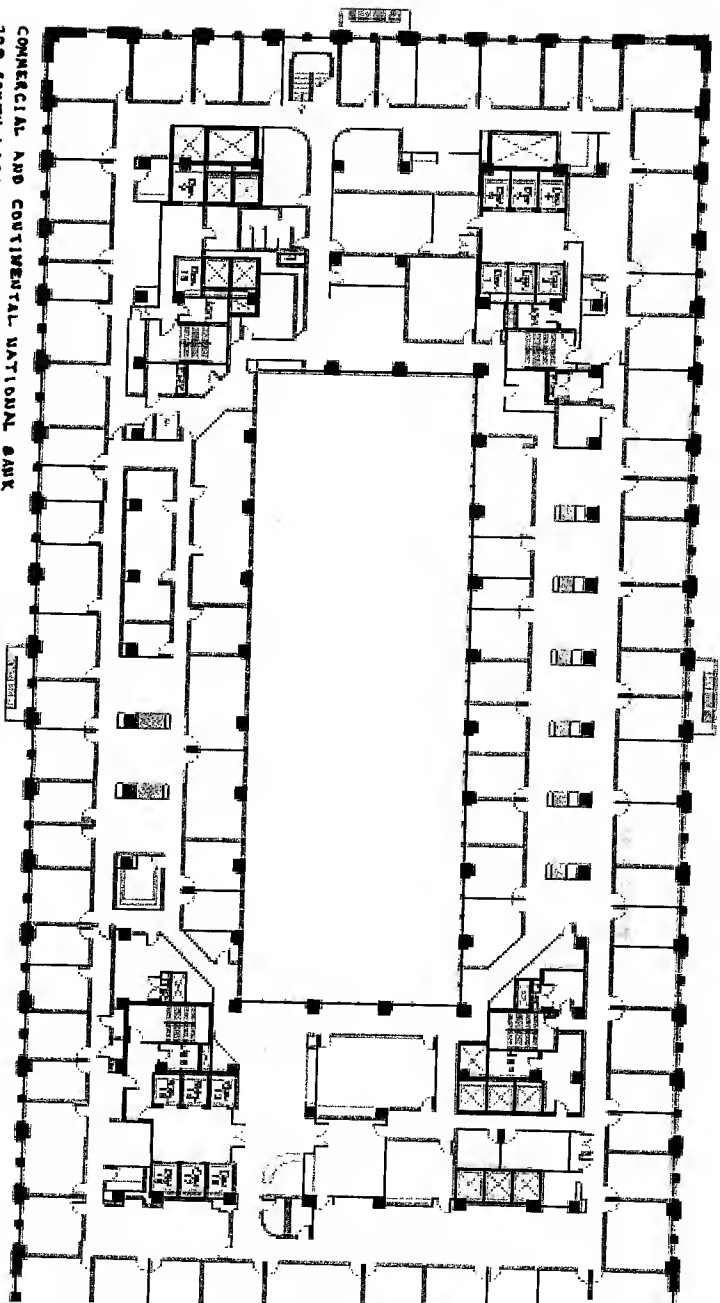


COMMERCIAL AND CONTINENTAL NATIONAL BANK  
 209 SOUTH LASALLE  
 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
 5<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR

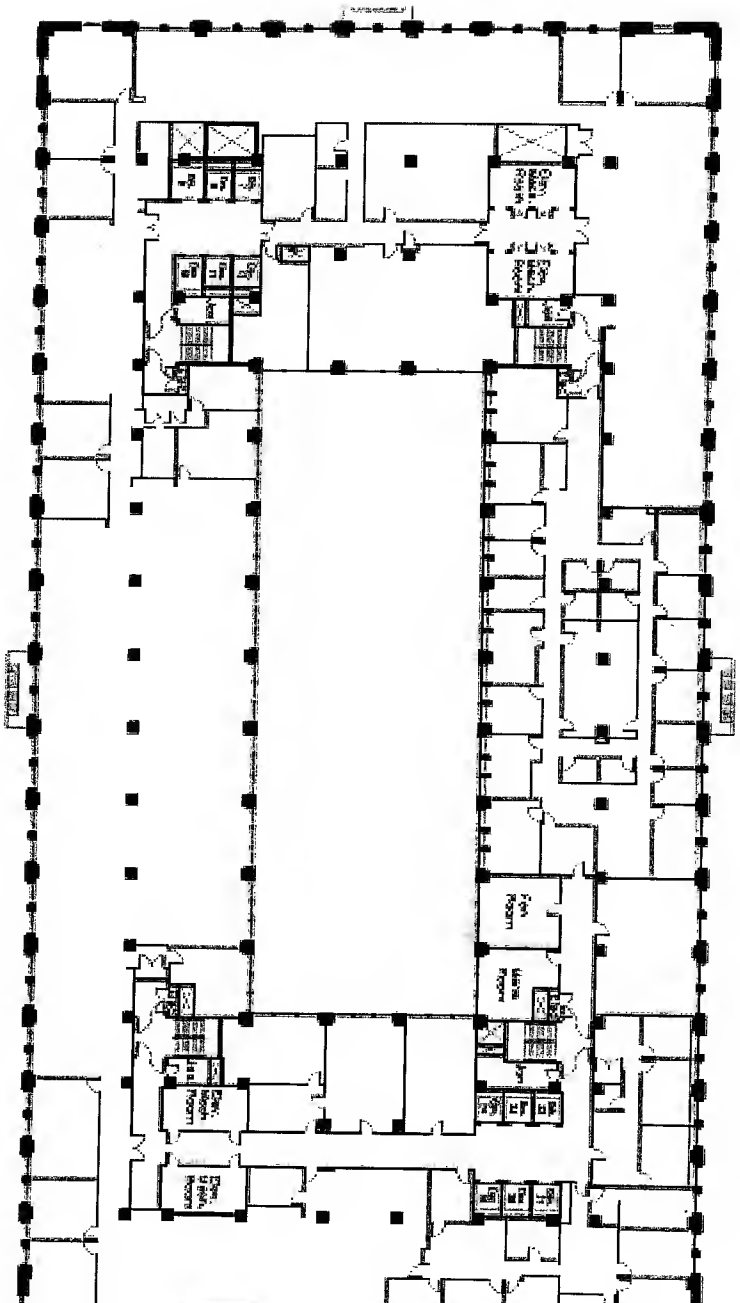
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COMMERCIAL AND CONFIDENTIAL NATIONAL BANK  
200 SOUTH LA SALLE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 10th FLOOR

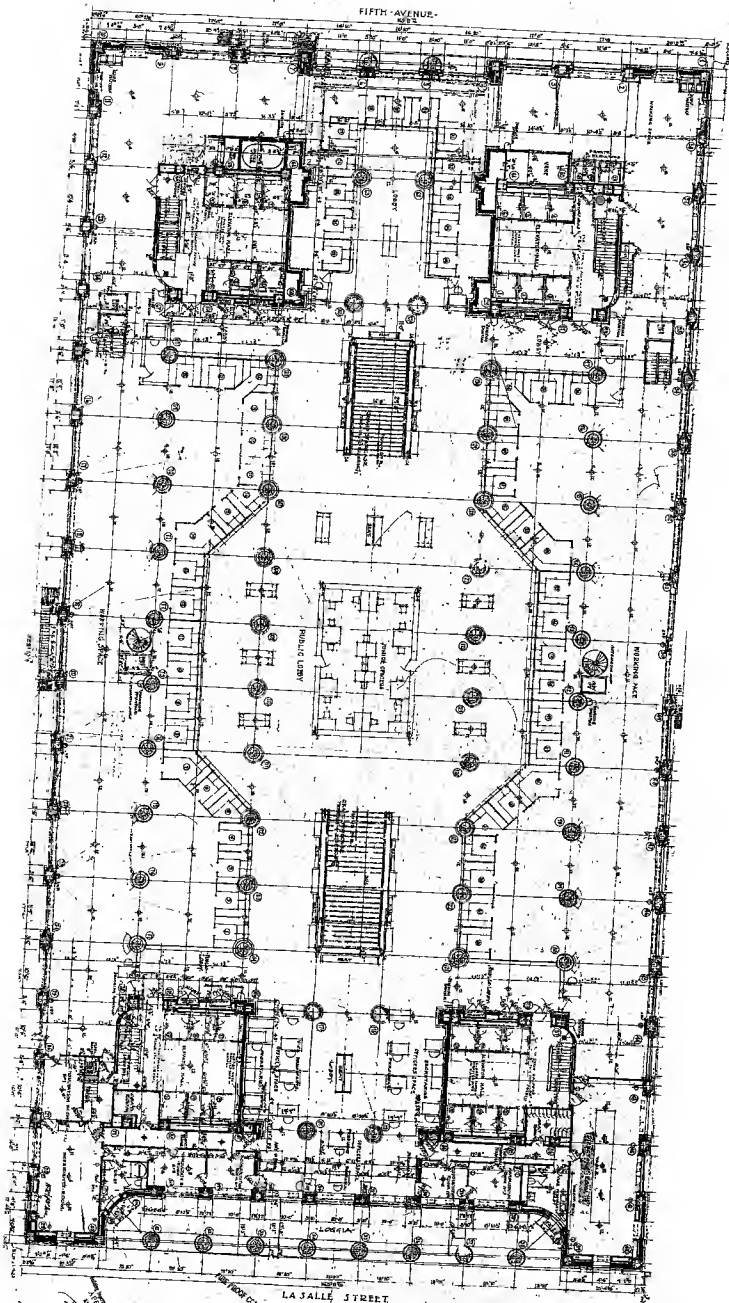


COMMERCIAL AND CONTINENTAL NATIONAL BANK  
208 SOUTH LA SALLE  
CHICAGO, ILL. INDORIS  
15<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
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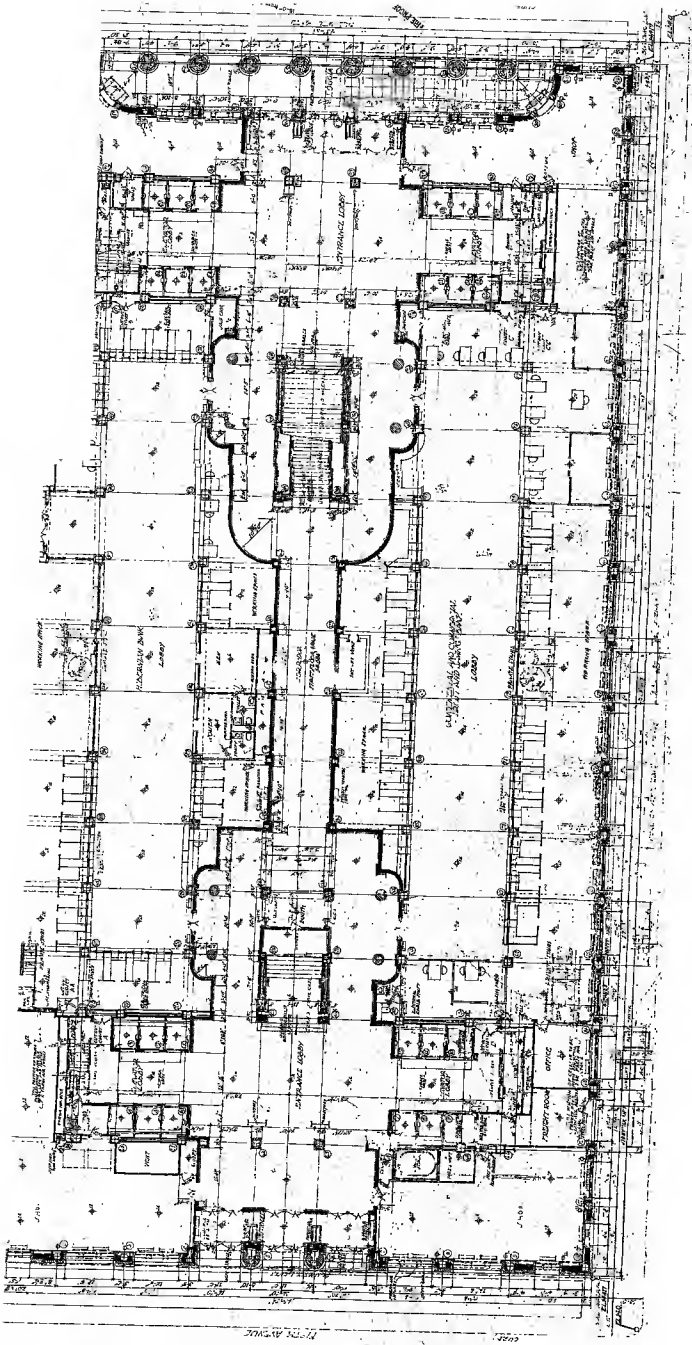


Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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AS BUILT





New Deal Resources of Colorado's Eastern Plains MPS, 64S00970, COVER DOCUMENTATION  
APPROVED, 1/27/07

IDAHO, IDAHO COUNTY,  
Campbell's Ferry,  
SE bank of Salmon River at Mile 148; Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness, Riggins  
vicinity, 07000037, LISTED, 2/08/07

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Continental and Commercial National Bank,  
208 S. LaSalle,  
Chicago, 07000064,  
LISTED, 2/14/07

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Quinn Chapel of the A.M.E. Church,  
2401 S. Wabash Ave.,  
Chicago, 79000827,  
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVED, 2/16/07

MARYLAND, WICOMICO COUNTY,  
San Domingo School,  
11526 Old School Rd.,  
Sharpstown vicinity, 07000044,  
LISTED, 2/16/07

MISSOURI, FRANKLIN COUNTY,  
Spaunhorst and Mayn Building,  
300-305 Jefferson St.,  
Washington, 07000041,  
LISTED, 2/16/07  
(Washington, Missouri MPS)

MISSOURI, JACKSON COUNTY,  
Kuehne--Schmidt Apartments,  
3737-39 and 3741-43 Main Sts.,  
Kansas City, 07000040,  
LISTED, 2/13/07  
(Colonnade Apartment Buildings of Kansas City, MO MPS)

MISSOURI, ST. LOUIS INDEPENDENT CITY,  
Laclede Gas Light Company Pumping Station G,  
4401 Chouteau Ave.,  
St. Louis (Independent City), 07000020, LISTED, 2/08/07

MISSOURI, WARREN COUNTY,  
Southwestern Bell Repeater Station--Wright City, NE corner of North Service Rd. and Bell Rd.,  
Wright City, 07000039, LISTED, 2/13/07

NEW JERSEY, CAPE MAY COUNTY,  
Rio Grande Station,  
720 NJ 9,  
Lower Township, 07000047,  
LISTED, 2/13/07

NEW JERSEY, MONMOUTH COUNTY,